

drink heartily. Some families, in order to  
 discharge this  
 pious duty, run into debt for the whole year. In  
 the houses  
 everything is put in order, washed, and  
 scoured for the  
 reception of the dear and distinguished  
 guests. A tall  
 bamboo pole is set up in the front of every house  
 and allowed  
 to stand there for seven days. A small basket  
 containing  
 areca, betel, and leaves of gilt paper is fastened  
 to the pole.  
 The erection of the pole is a, sacred rite which  
 no family  
 omits to perform, though why they do so few  
 people can  
 say. Some, however, allege that the posts are  
 intended to  
 guide the ancestral spirits to their old homes.  
 The cere-  
 mony of the reception of the shades takes  
 place at night-  
 fall on the last day of the year. The house of  
 the head  
 of the family is then decked with flowers, and in  
 the room  
 which serves as a domestic chapel the altar of  
 the ancestors  
 is surrounded with flowers, among which the  
 lotus, the  
 emblem of immortality, is most conspicuous.  
 On a table  
 are set red candles, perfumes, incense, sandal-  
 wood, and  
 plates full of bapanas, oranges, and other  
 fruits. The  
 relations crouch before the altar, and kneeling  
 at the foot  
 of it the head of the house invokes the name of  
 the family  
 which he represents. Then in solemn tones he  
 recites an  
 incantation, mentioning the names of his most  
 illustrious  
 ancestors and marking time with the strokes of  
 a hammer  
 upon a gong, while crackers are exploded  
 outside the  
 room. After that, he implores the ancestral  
 shades to  
 protect their descendants and invites them to  
 a repast,  
 which is spread for them on a table. Round

this table he  
 walks, serving the invisible guests with his own hands. He  
 distributes to them smoking balls of rice in little china  
 saucers, and pours tea or spirits into each little cup, while  
 he murmurs words of invitation and compliment. When  
 the ghosts have eaten and drunk their fill, the head of the  
 family returns to the altar and salutes them for the last  
 time. Finally, he takes leaves of yellow paper, covered  
 with gold and silver spangles, and throws them into a  
 brazier placed at the foot of the ancestral tablets. These  
 papers represent imaginary bars of gold and silver which  
 the living send to the dead. Cardboard models of houses,  
 furniture, jewels, clothes, of everything in short that the